

The United States must do everything we can to help Latin America crack down on terrorist groups in the region, both through joint military exercises and through legislation, giving to governments new tools to eliminate the terrorist threats.

I strongly urge passage of this timely resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I welcome the focus this bill places on the growing influence of Iran in Latin America. Because Iran is the leading state sponsor of terrorism, we dare not lose sight of its increasing presence and activities in the region, nor can we forget its past transgressions.

One year ago, Argentina's State Prosecutor concluded that the horrific 1994 AMIA bombing was "decided and organized by the highest leaders of the former government of Iran."

Yet, somehow the leader of Iran continues to be warmly received by many in the hemisphere. In fact, he has found much strength in his friendship formed with Hugo Chavez, Ahmadinejad's key ally in the region.

The implications of Iran's presence in Latin America are disconcerting in themselves. When partnered with the power of Venezuela's petroleum, it is truly a cause for alarm and concern.

Ahmadinejad has capitalized on his relationship with Chavez to inject his influence throughout the hemisphere, recently signing a cooperation agreement worth \$1 billion with Bolivia, and is reportedly making plans to establish an embassy for the first time in Quito, Ecuador.

Furthermore, the disturbing alliance between Venezuela, Iran and Cuba cannot be ignored. The radical efforts of Ahmadinejad, Chavez and Castro to stir anti-U.S. resentment in the region and support for anti-American regimes across the hemisphere are an increasing and undeniable threat to our security. For this reason, we must remain vigilant in our attention to the hemisphere and be sincere in our efforts to strengthen our relationships with the nations of Latin America.

I commend the efforts being taken by the U.S. and our partners in Latin America to combat terrorist activities. However, we must recognize that if the U.S. is to support the efforts of our friends in the region, we must support them wholeheartedly. We cannot continue to send mixed signals. Denying free trade agreements with Colombia, while calling for increased cooperation on any front is not good, fair or effective policy.

I thank my colleague for introducing this measure and look forward to additional efforts by Congress to comprehensively support our security in the Western Hemisphere.

Again, I have one more speaker, Mr. ENGEL.

Mr. ENGEL. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he would like to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER).

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I again thank my friend from Arkansas for yielding, and I thank the gentleman from New York for his very thoughtful remarks on this important resolution. I rise in strong support of it.

I think that both my friends from New York and Arkansas have underscored the grave concern that we have about Iran's entry into this hemisphere, and especially in the remarks offered by the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Speaker, he underscored this nexus which has been developed by Hugo Chavez in Caracas, Venezuela and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Now, what is it that we have seen? Obviously there are a great deal of differences that exist when it comes to the vision that a Hugo Chavez would have and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would have. But they have rallied around one particular point, and that is, virulent opposition to everything that the United States of America stands for. Both of them have been hypercritical of the United States and our policies and the cause of freedom, quite frankly, based on what we've seen in both countries.

The thing that is most troubling is the fact that Mr. Chavez has had this pattern of inviting Mr. Ahmadinejad into this hemisphere and, basically, continuing to promote the anti-American sentiment. And it is cause for concern, and I believe this resolution is very important.

Mr. Chavez took Mr. Ahmadinejad to the inauguration of Rafael Correa in Quito, Ecuador. And again, as my friend from Arkansas has just said, the prospect of an Iranian Embassy opening in Quito is something that's very troubling.

Similarly, he took him to meet with Evo Morales, the President of Bolivia, again, a very, very troubling sign. And I will say, quite frankly, I am even concerned about, while we've heralded the election that took place a week ago yesterday in Argentina, I do believe that there is reason for concern of the potential for this linkage there that exists. I think it's very exciting to see Cristina Kirchner become the President, succeeding her husband in Argentina, but I do believe that we need to remain very vigilant in looking at this linkage between Hugo Chavez, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and others within this hemisphere.

I would also like to laud my colleague from Arkansas for underscoring the importance of continuing to build our economic alliances with those countries in the hemisphere that are committed to political pluralism, the development of democratic institutions, the rule of law and self-determination.

We are on the verge, this week, we're going to be addressing the issue of a U.S.-Peru free trade agreement. We

also have on the horizon, as we all know, in this hemisphere both the Panama and the Colombia free trade agreements.

And so I will say, Mr. Speaker, I think this resolution is very timely. I congratulate my friends for underscoring the importance of this. And I hope that a by-product of it will be the recognition that working with our allies in this region to develop even stronger economic ties should be the next step for us to take.

Again, I urge strong support of this resolution.

Mr. MACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for House Resolution 435, concerning Iran's growing influence in Latin America.

I also want to thank my colleague from Florida, Congressman RON KLEIN, for all of his hard work on this resolution.

He is passionate about Latin America and it has been a pleasure to work with you to get this important resolution to the floor today.

This resolution, which has garnered wide, bi-partisan support, formally expresses what many of us have known for quite some time: Iran's growing ties and meddling in Latin America is a grave concern for us all.

There is no doubt that Iran has given strategic, financial, logistical, and tactical support and safe haven to terrorists groups such as Hezbollah and others.

And, according to military leaders at U.S. Southern Command, there is no doubt that Islamic terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah, have infiltrated indigenous groups throughout significant areas of Latin America in order to develop terrorist networks throughout the region.

Of particular concern to me is the growing and burgeoning friendship between Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

Iran, in my opinion, is seeking to do in Venezuela what the former Soviet Union did in Cuba: establish a base of operations in the Western Hemisphere in order to foment hatred and instability throughout the region.

This should cause great alarm for us all.

But this problem is bigger than Iran and Venezuela alone.

For far too long we have ignored growing unrest and loss of freedoms and the foundations for democracy throughout Latin America.

I have publicly and privately urged this administration and Congress to embrace our allies and do more throughout the region.

Our neglect has allowed leaders such as President Chavez to whip up opposition to the United States.

And further neglect, should we not act now to support our friends in the region, will allow Iran and others to continue to grow their terrorist networks throughout Latin America.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, having no further speakers, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the